



TIPS FOR PROVIDING WRITTEN MATERIALS IN ALTERNATE FORMATS

What is an alternate format? Why do I need to provide alternate formats?

The federal Fair Housing Act, local fair housing laws, and other disability access laws require housing providers to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, or services, when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. One common reasonable accommodation request that you may receive as a housing provider to make your written materials available in alternate formats, such as large print, Braille, computer disk, or audio cassette tape.

When an individual with a disability makes a request for print materials in alternate formats, you should provide the material in the requested form when possible. You do not have to grant the request if it would result in an undue financial or administrative hardship. If someone requests a particular alternate format, you may offer other alternatives (for example, if you get a request for Braille, you may mention that you could provide it on computer disk instead).

How can I let people know that my written materials are available in alternate formats?

You can notify your applicants, tenants or prospective home buyers that alternate formats are available upon request by adding a short statement to your written materials (such as forms, lists of tenancy rules, rental agreements, sales agreements, etc.). There is no specific language prescribed for the notification; you may want to state "This material is available in alternate formats upon request" (or simply "alternate formats available"). We recommend that this notification sentence be in a sans serif, 14-18 point font for those who can read large print.

There is no obligation to have an alternate format immediately available; however, when an alternate format request is made, you should provide the requested material in a timely fashion. Depending on the alternate format requested and the length of the document, it may take a few minutes to a few weeks to provide.

Where can I obtain alternate formatted materials?

Large Print: This is the easiest alternate formats to provide. You can ask the person requesting the document what size print they want, and simply use your copy machine "zoom" feature to enlarge the material. Or, if the document was produced using Word or a similar word processing program, you can quickly change the print size (and font style, if necessary), and print out a large print copy.

Computer Disk: This is relatively easy to provide as an alternate format, particularly if the document was produced using Word or a similar word processing program. You may need to discuss whether the type of document you have is compatible with the requestor's software (PDF files may not be accessible for some people).

Braille: It will take more time to provide Braille versions of documents. If the document is fairly short and straightforward, it is possible to get a document Brailled within a few days. If the document is longer and/or complex, you will need to confirm delivery date with the vendor. If the information is already a Word, WordPerfect, or text file document, you can simply e-mail the document to the Braille vendor. If it is in PageMaker, you will need to convert it to an acceptable type of file prior to sending it to the vendor. If it is some other type of document, contact the vendor to see what to provide for them to do the Brailing.

Sources for Brailing in Washington State

Louis Braille Center

320 Dayton Street, #125
Edmonds, WA 98020-3590

Contacts: Carolyn Meyer and Michael Cavanaugh
Telephone: 425-776-4042 Voice
Fax: 425-778-2384
e-mail: lbc@louisbraillecenter.org
Web site: www.louisbraillecenter.org

Washington Braille Access Center

Washington School for the Blind
2310 East 13th Street
Vancouver, WA 98661

Contacts: Colleen Lines and Kandi Lukowski
Telephone: 360-696-6321, ext. 158 Voice
TTY: 360-696-6321, ext. 171
Fax: 360-737-2120
e-mail: braille@wssb.wa.gov
Web site: www.wssb.wa.gov

With either Braille vendor:

- you may send the document to be Brailled by e-mail or on disk
- the file should be in Word, WordPerfect, or a text file
- if the file is in PageMaker, you will need to convert it to a different type of file
- if you have only a print copy, it can be scanned or re-typed for an additional fee
- costs vary, so confirm estimated cost with the vendor you select
- Brailled materials will be sent to you with an invoice
- you may request that the Braille materials be sent directly to the individual free of charge via the U.S. Postal Service "Free Matter for the Blind"

Audio Cassette Tape:

State Audio Services
Attn: Pam Wilson
Department: Disability Support Services
Central Washington University
400 East 8th Avenue
Ellensburg, Washington 98926-7431
Telephone: 509-963-2171
TTY: 509-963-2143
Fax: 509-963-3235
e-mail: WilsonP@cwu.edu

Send a print copy of the material you need recorded. Within a day or two, they will fax back a quote and an order form. E-mail is an option, though admittedly not reliable. If you send something via e-mail, be sure the document you send can be read by Corel WordPerfect.

Note: *Inclusion in this resource list does not constitute endorsement by the Fair Housing Partners of Washington State, nor does omission imply non-endorsement. Our goal is to provide you with information on some available key resources. Please let us know if you are aware of a useful resource missing from this list.*

Free Postage When Mailing Braille, Large Print, and Audio Tapes

Most alternate formatted materials can be mailed free through the U.S. Postal Service to people who are blind, low vision, or who cannot use or read conventionally printed materials due to a physical disability. This includes brochures, information sheets, booklets, and other reading matter, in Braille, large print (14-point or larger), or on tape. To use this service, omit stamps and print the words **Free Matter for the Blind & Handicapped** in the upper right hand corner of the envelope or package. These materials are subject to inspection by the Postal Service and may not contain any advertising. Handwritten or typewritten letters are subject to regular postage.

Contact agency:

*King County Office of Civil Rights
400 Yesler Way, Room 260
Seattle, WA 98104-2683*

206-296-7592, TTY 206-296-7596

www.metrokc.gov/dias/ocre/ho.htm